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ABSTRACT

This book relates the history of the Choctaw Nation before and after the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced some Mississippi Choctaw to flee to Oklahoma. Some Choctaws nonetheless chose to remain in Mississippi, and today the tribe occupies eight reservation communities scattered throughout that state. The book constitutes a case study of the effects of federal Indian policy on Indian tribes in the Southeast and of the cultural survival of one tribe. In the early 1800s, the government sent Christian missionaries to work among Indians. The missionaries soon found that they themselves were subject to the aspirations of Choctaw leaders, who demanded that they teach Choctaw children to read, write, and do mathematics. Choctaw leaders saw missionaries as a means of gaining an education in the White man's way so that they could learn to deal with the forces infringing on their lives. Choctaws, like other Indians, adopted Christianity; by the early 19th century there were churches and schools throughout the Choctaw Nation. Although Choctaws tried to adapt to the new religion and to a market economy, they were driven from their land base in 1830 and were moved west. About 5,000 ancestors of the current Mississippi Band remained in the East. In the late 1800s missionaries arrived once more, this time drawn by pity over the desperate economic plight of landless people. Schools and churches returned to Choctaw communities, and missionary advocacy helped the Choctaw tribe gain federal recognition and the beginnings of a reservation in 1918. Thus the role of missionaries and Christianity moved full circle in shaping the lives of the Choctaw people. Includes photographs, maps, an index, and an extensive bibliography. (LP)

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